

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, June 26. 1694.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether that passage of St. Paul in the 1 Tim. 3. 2. A Bishop must be the Husband of one Wife, does not seem to allow that the Apostle permitted other Men to have more? I am yet undetermined in my Judgment what to believe concerning it, my Inclinations make me willing to think it lawful. I find my self brisk and Amorous, I hate Whoring, but shou'd think Polygamy the happiest Life in the World, if it were not forbidden: I have many Disputes with my self sometimes, intending to give a loose to my desires, and then again reflecting that at best I am but dubious, and may bring my self into an unhappy Condition, if my Judgment shou'd ever alter, but am at last resolv'd to be determin'd by you.

Ans. The Reason we have so many unhappy Marriages, is because the generality of the World are incapable of knowing what true Love is, but have like you such an unreasonable and unruly Passion to be satisfied that spoils their true taste of Pleasure, and inclines 'em rather to please the Brute than the Man, to seek after a fair Face, or diversity of such, than a wise Woman and a Friend, but the Event generally shows the Mistrust of the Choice. The Conversation of one Ingenious Woman, that is wise enough to Love, prudent and agreeable in temper, will give more Felicity to such as are capable of being happy, than the Choice of a thousand; nay, were it possible they shou'd all have the same qualifications; because true Love is only between two, and without that all the Pleasures of Life are insipid. This was well known to our wise Creator, who at first made but two, as a full Compliment of each others Happiness: No were your Reason so bad, and Inclinations so much vitiated that you cou'd have no relish of such a life, at least the Laws of your Countrey might be sufficient to regulate your practice; but to convince you, that you as little understand St. Paul as you do the Notions of a happy Life, we'll explain his meaning to you, That a Bishop must be the Husband of but one Wife, must be understood the commanding him to Marry but one Wife, which does not simply exclude the plurality of Women in the same time, but even second Weddings. After this manner Lycophron calls Helen *menavop*, The Wife of three Husbands, altho' she never had three at a time, Theseus being dead before Paris stole her from Menelaus. Afranius calls a Woman that was married a second time *Riviram*, and Tertullian one that was marry'd but once *Univiram*. The Primitive Christians founded it upon this passage, and 'tis not unlikely but it might be in imitation of the Romans, who did not permit their High Priest to marry a second time, that they also forbid their Bishops. So the same Apostle likewise in 1 Cor. 5. ver. 9. requires 'em to choose such Widdows for the Service of the Church as shou'd be the Wife of but one Husband; that is, that they shou'd be such as had not marry'd again; for Women were not allowed to have many at the same time, and St. Paul would not have forbidden a thing that never happened. But the Roman Laws permitting Women to put away their Husbands, 'twas common for Women that were not very Chast to change them often, as these passages of Seneca and Juvenal prove:

Sen. *Illustres quaedam ac Nobiles familie, non consulum numero, sed Maritorum, annos suos computant, & exiunt Matrimonii Causa nubunt repudii.*

Juv. — *Sic fiunt octo Mariti
Quinque per autumnos.*

Quest. 2. A young Lady of a good Family, well bred, of a moderate Fortune, and altogether of a free and airy temper, is Court'd by an elderly Man, of a very mean extradi-

on, morose Nature, formerly a Libertine, of a jealous Disposition, but considerably rich, to whom by the persuasions and solicitous desires of her Father and other Relations, she hath promised Marriage; the same young Lady is likewise Court'd by a young Gentleman of a good Family, well Educated, suitable Fortune, sober Conversation, and agreeable Temper, but at present without an Employment, whom to please her Father and other Friends more than her self, she hath refused, though at the same time its believed she would be more happy with him than her old spark; your Advice therefore as Persons unconcern'd is desired, what is most proper for the young Lady to do in this Affair, and whether she should consummate the Promise made at her Fathers desire, or how she shou'd behave her self to the young Gentleman, who she is well satisfied Loves her, and would marry her without a Portion: If possible, let me have an Answer in the next Mercury, for your Advice will be of great Concern to your thereby oblig'd Servant?

Ans. But you, like many others, are in too much haste Madam, to be soon answer'd, for you forgot to Date, and we can't tell when your Letter came in: And now we do Answer't we doubt we shan't please you, for our Advice will be for the Lady to marry neither of 'em: Not the Younger, because against the Consent of her Parents, which it appears not that she's like to obtain: Nor the Elder, because his Temper so disagreeable, and no wonder his former lewdness makes him Jealous, it being the natural Consequence of it: Nor can her Parents force her to any such Match, it being but Justice to allow Children a Negative Voice in those matters, since all the happiness of their Lives depends upon it, and it being a sufficient Tryal of her Obedience to sacrifice her own Inclinations to her Parents Will, but too great a one to be her self a Sacrifice to one for whom she has so much Reason to have so great an Aversion.

Quest. 3. I had a desperate Debtor, and likewise a Friend who had Money to lend: I procured my Debtors bond to my Friend for so much money as wou'd repay me, the Debtor dies not able to pay my Friend, who therefore demands it of me. Pray give your Opinion whether I ought to pay him or no?

Ans. If your Friend was so willing to get rid of his Money as my Bond wou'd serve turn, and he lent it purely upon faith of the Debtor, without any respect either to your Persuasions, or Interest, you are wholly free from all Obligations; since 'twas then but an accident that you were the person that received the Money; but if 'twas out of Friendship to you, you ought in Gratitude to make his Loss as easy as your Circumstances will permit.

Quest. 4. Whether the Tempest on the Sea of Tiberias were natural, many denying it cou'd be performed by the power of Nature?

Ans. Mr. Wesley in his Life of Christ seems to leave it doubtful whether 'twere rais'd by the Devil, or only natural: Lib. 1. p. 10.

“Whether the Enemy assay'd in vain,
“What he had lost at Land at Sea to gain,
“Or hop'd he by Surprizal might prevail,
“Where by fair Force he durst no more assail:
“Or whether only Nature sent the storm,
“To Experience what her Master cou'd perform.
“Suffer'd by him whose word can storms remove,
“To show his God-like Power and God-like Love.”

Thus he in Verse; and in his Prose notes upon it he says, “Such Tempests may be natural, and that he

"has bin inform'd by Ey-witneses that Harlem-meer
"has sometimes great Tempests, and is as rough as the
Sea. it self, or to that purpose.

Quest. 5. *I have been Married to a Man a
few Years, who hath much deceived me in my
expectations as to his good Husbandry and
Love; for his Extravagancies are far above his
Estate in prospect, for as yet he hath not any,
wholly depending on my industry for his Main-
tainance, besides he keeps Company with other
Women, a Child being laid to him about a
Year since, and although he deny's it, yet by
circumstance and the Womans Oath, all his
Friends are satisfied 'tis true; to compleat all
(since the Child is dead, and the Charge satis-
fied out of my Labour) he hath frequented
some other Women who have given him worse than
a Child: all which, have caused me to resolve
never to live with him again as my Husband;
since which he is got well again, and solicits
me himself and by Friends to wave my resolves,
and live together as Man and Wife, promising a
through Reformation. I desire to know which
is the least Evil, to break my Protestation and
Vow to God Almighty, and live with him again,
as before; or leave him to his Ruin, by my
unkindness, as he calls it. Your speedy Answer
is earnestly desired.*

Ans^r. The Vow you made was an occasi-
on of his Lewdness, and on supposition of his
persisting in it, and made to prevent your
own Ruin. If therefore he really reforms,
we think the occasion of your Vow ceasing,
the Obligation of it ceases too, and being
the wrong'd Person, you are at Liberty to
forgive him or not, as shall appear 't'ye most
prudent and convenient; tho' if you'd take
our advice, he shou'd keep a long Lent first,
before you again trusted him, to see whe-
ther his Reformation were real, or only a
pretence to delude you, and once more en-
danger your Ruin.

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